

Washington--U.S. Congressman Mike Pence delivered the following opening statement the situation in Egypt at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing today:

"Thank you Madame Chairman. I want to thank you for calling this, what turns out to be an extraordinarily timely hearing.

"And I always want to make the point - I want to thank the secretary (Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg) for his service to the country, for his distinguished career. It's an honor to have you back before the committee.

"For some reason this feels a little bit like déjà vu all over again. I am sure it does to you, Mr. Secretary, with your long career in these matters. And frankly, with word of the potential eminent and historic change that could take place in Egypt before the turn of the clock today in that part of the world, this conversation is extremely important.

"I must say, as the Ranking Member knows as we partnered together in the Summer of 2009 to author a resolution that passed this chamber nearly unanimously and passed the Senate unanimously, my first inclination is to stand with the people. To stand with those who are clamoring for basic human rights, for freedoms, for more access to the democratic process and

I carry that bias into this conversation.

"I support those who continue to call for democratic reforms. I am grateful for the State Department and for the Administration's broad expressions of support for an orderly transition and the recognition of universal human rights.

"Let me, though, by way of raising an issue to you, express a word of caution. One of the first things that I learned as a Member of this Committee traveling into that part of the world was the enormous importance of Egypt and to the history of the region. Not just at this time, but obviously through the millennium. And that the developments in Egypt are of enormous consequence to U.S. strategic interest, and I would say most especially to our most cherished ally, Israel.

"So while I know that the focus of the administration has largely been, and your remarks have largely been on ensuring an orderly transition, I am concerned about an orderly transition to what? Or an orderly transition to who?

"And specifically I find my mind drifting back to history and to lessons of history. Edmund Burke - famously a Member of Parliament, one of the strongest supporters of the revolution that took place in the colonies here in the United States, but also one of the harshest critics of what happened in France - Edmund Burke warned that different than the American Revolution, which was largely born on a reach for democracy and foundation of the respect for the rule of law, the

French Revolution was something different. And he warned of nefarious factions, which could have opportunities, 'to become master of your assembly and the master of your whole republic.'"